

Need and Rationale: Needs Assessment

June 27-28, 2007, Matt Mayberry, Director of the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, Betty Kilsdonk, Director of the Estes Park Area Historical Museum, Sue Keefer, then Director of the Las Animas Public Library and Steve Fisher, Head of Special Collections and Archives at the University of Denver were invited to represent the Colorado cultural heritage community at the Connecting to Collections National Conservation Summit held in Washington, DC. The Summit presented the recommendations of *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections*, and asked the participants to consider how the recommendations related to their states.

In Spring 2008 and again in the summer of 2008 following the Denver IMLS Connecting to Collections Summit, the Colorado Wyoming Association of Museums (CWAM) invited key stakeholders from various Colorado cultural heritage institutions and organizations to review the IMLS Connecting to Collections grant initiative. This group included representatives from university and public libraries, academic and county archives, art and tribal museums, historic houses and museums with natural history collections, the Colorado Historical Society, and two independent conservators. Large institutions and very small institutions were represented. The group concluded that Colorado's heritage institutions *lack enough Colorado-specific collections needs assessment information*.

From these early meetings, the Colorado Collections Consortium was formed. The partnership includes the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums (CWAM), Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA,) Bibliographical Center for Research's (BCR) Digital and Preservation Services unit—which includes the Collaborative Digitization Program, the Colorado Historical Society (CHS,) the Colorado State Library (CSL), and representatives from the Colorado library community. See Appendix A for a complete list of the initial Consortium members.

Individual Consortium members have a long history of conservation and disaster response initiatives. CWAM has a volunteer disaster recovery team that can be deployed within a day or so, preservation and emergency preparedness classes are offered throughout the states of Colorado and Wyoming; BCR offers book repair classes on a regular basis; and SRMA has a list of the state's emergency resources on their website. While these activities raise the awareness of the importance of collection conservation, there is only informal links between different types of heritage organizations.

A successful IMLS Connecting to Collections grant application will allow Colorado to build on our informal collaborative efforts, creating a formal relationship to provide communication across cultural heritage communities. The grant will benefit Colorado's more than 1,200 libraries, museums, archives, historical societies, other cultural heritage organizations, and by extension, the people of Colorado.

Heritage Health Index Recommendations

In the recent *The Heritage Health Index* report, cultural heritage organizations are charged with providing a safe environment and proper care for collections. The report recommended that institutions find ways to:

- Give priority to providing safe conditions for the collections we hold in trust
- Develop emergency plans to protect our collections
- Assign responsibility for caring for collections to members of the staff
- And, ultimately, engage individuals at all levels of government and around the state to assume responsibility for providing support so that these collections may survive

The Heritage Health Index national data states that 80% of collecting institutions do not have emergency plans that include collections and staff trained to implement them. When analyzing with regard to institution type, archives fare the best with 30% having a plan and trained staff; 22% of libraries and museums have a plan and trained staff; 14% of archaeological repositories and scientific collections, while only 8% of

historical societies have emergency plans and trained staff. According to Heritage Preservation staff, Colorado specific information indicates the margin of error was +/- 9% for all the data in aggregate.

In June 2008, the Consortium took a snapshot of CWAM, SRMA, and CAL member institutions to assess the level of emergency planning, 37 responses were generated. A clear understanding of the conditions is a critical first step in improving collections care. A second key component the Consortium identified is *the need for training in preservation and conservation including emergency planning*.

- Fifty-four percent (54%) of the institutions disagreed with the statement “that they had undertaken formal emergency preparedness planning.” Comments included: “we have some disaster supplies on hand and a minimal plan, but have not involved all staff in planning or implementation” and “we began developing a plan years ago but never formalized, tested or completed it.” For those institutions that do have disaster planning we heard: “...we have a Disaster Quick Reference Guide that has emergency contact info and basic instructions.”
- Twenty-seven percent (27%) said there was not clear authority for collections care and “here again, budget limitations restrict activity, staff [are] over-worked as is,” and “Collections care is part of the volunteers [work] -- but only as a second thought.”
- Thirty-seven percent (37%) disagreed with the statement: “We continue to address storage and conservation needs for our collections. Some remain in less than ideal conditions,” “We have done a risk assessment and many risks remain, most related to old building infrastructure, access, maintenance uncertainties. Lack of campus appreciation for value and care standards for collections. Circulating collections [are] at risk from patrons.”
- Fifty-one percent (51%) said that they did not have climate control for their collections. Comments ranged from: “the best we can do is to limit fluctuations in temp, etc.,” to “we do (have climate control) for our Museum however not at our office where our photos, archival information etc. is.” To “we have a thorough "climate monitoring program" but only vague control due to aging equipment etc.” and “comfort for patrons trumps all, however storage environments are relatively stable.”

General Conditions in Colorado

Colorado is a large state, some 2,000 square miles, and is known for its ski slopes, but the wide diversity of topography and climate is often a surprise to outsiders. Colorado is characterized by short grass prairie in the east (40% of the state is high plains), montane forests to alpine tundra in the central mountains, and canyons and mesas in the plateau region in the west. Colorado generally has dry winters with occasional wind-blown snow, very cold temperatures alternating with surprisingly warm days. Spring brings highly changeable weather, occasional blizzards, and large temperature changes. Summer has low humidity with hot days and comfortable nights—however, the threat of big thunderstorms is always there and corresponding sudden jumps in humidity. The plains see some of the most ferocious hailstorms of the entire continent.

Colorado’s climate and geography leads to a range of natural disasters: wind, cold, snow, flood, drought and fire. **Colorado averages 60 tornadoes a year, ninth state in its frequency of tornadoes.** Tornadoes devastate entire communities in an afternoon. On the Eastern Plains of Colorado the town of Windsor was hit by a May, 2008 EF4 tornado which blew off the roof of a local museum that was under renovation. Dry conditions lead to **wildfires**, especially threatening to the Southwest part of the state because of drought conditions and dry lightning strikes. In 2004, Mesa Verde National Park and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center with their libraries and vast collections of archaeological and material objects were threatened by fire. Colorado’s sudden but **extreme rainfall** simply overwhelmed the campus of Colorado State University with a flash flood that devastated the library and other buildings on campus July 28, 1997. In August 2008, University of Denver Penrose Library experienced flooding threatening Special Collections and Archives.

While natural disasters can be dramatic news events, all heritage institutions are subject to a multitude of

man-made emergencies: lack of fire suppression or alarms, especially in collection areas, broken sprinkler heads, frozen pipes, HVAC systems that malfunction. On June 5, 2004, several major structures, including the library and City Hall, were bulldozed by a citizen gone mad in Granby, Colorado. In Granby, emergency assistance was a challenge, as in many isolated Colorado communities, with resulting damage to collections. Complicating the climatic and created conservation issues, Colorado no longer has a conservation center.

Until now, there has not been a cross- disciplinary approach taken to problem solving for preservation. All five primary partners; CWAM, SRMA, BCR, CHS and CSL are committed to change. The conditions and services available for preservation of collections need to improve and a list of priorities developed.

The Planning Process

To create a culture of emergency preparedness among our institutions and communities, the five partner organizations propose a planning process that includes the key elements outlined in the Connecting with Collections Statewide Planning Grant. Our proposal includes further development of a baseline data set building on the information in the Heritage Health Index; development of a Consortium of heritage institutions to provide ongoing guidance; development of a trends document through onsite surveys; and a series of workshops offered through professional conferences.

Action 1: Consortium Committee Activities

The Project Coordinator will invite each of the Consortium members to designate representatives to the Consortium Committee with a total of sixteen members. The Committee will meet regularly throughout the project. The Consortium will be responsible for oversight of the project, assuring that the grant requirements are implemented. In-person meetings and conference calls will be held. Other communication tools including e-mail and social networking devices such as a wiki will augment three face-to-face meetings.

Consortium Meeting One—March, 2009:

Product: Project Coordinator calls Consortium Advisory Committee Meeting One.

Expected results: Review the grant proposal, budget, timeline, review HHI disaggregated Colorado survey data to be acquired, and plan for May through September onsite surveying. Introduce committee communication structure and reporting responsibilities. See Appendix C for sample meeting agendas.

April-August, 2009

E-mail and conference calls: Review HHI survey results, review proposed survey, identify institutions for onsite visits. Review RFP for Conservation Workshops. Confirm meeting agendas and activities.

Consortium Meeting Two – September, 2009

Product: A detailed plan for statewide meetings and training sessions for each conference including budget, venues, program, potential speakers, and audience.

Expected Results: Survey results and analysis will be presented to the Consortium Committee. The pre-conference agendas based on the survey results and trends, promotional materials, and workshop evaluation materials will be included. The Committee will finalize complete plans including workshop agendas and propose speakers for presentations at Colorado Association of Libraries, Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums and Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists at statewide annual meetings. Committee members will be assigned responsibility for contacting speakers and working with the Association that they represent.

Consortium Committee Meeting Three – January, 2010.

Product: The Consortium will outline how organizations can take the findings from this grant to raise both public and private sector awareness and support for their institution type and collections. CAL, CWAM and SRMA have already agreed that other workshops and training sessions will be continue through 2011 to keep the momentum going while educating new volunteers or replacements.

Expected Results: The final Consortium meeting will include a review of evaluation materials from the conference workshops, a discussion of next steps and sustaining the training initiatives. A facilitated planning process will look at statewide public awareness campaigns. Lastly, the group will brainstorm sustainability in each community and garner commitments, ultimately creating a list of next steps to address the needs of Colorado's collections and archives, geared to ensuring survival into the next century and documenting and enriching future generations.

Action 2: Heritage Health Index Data: Building Baseline data March 15-April 30, 2009

Working with Heritage Preservation, the project will procure the data on the institutions from Colorado who completed the HHI survey. (250 Colorado institutions received the HHI survey, 61 completed the survey, 50 are identified and 11 are anonymous.) This data will be analyzed and will provide a foundation for our planning and decision-making. See Appendix D for Colorado institutions that completed the HHI survey.

Product: Raw data from the 50 Colorado institutions that completed the HHI survey.

Expected Results: Analysis of trends and questions will serve as the foundation for the first of two surveys - an online statewide survey and twelve onsite surveys.

Action 3: Survey Implementation and Analysis May-September, 2009

Two types of surveys and the accompanying analysis will be conducted by Tom Claeson of PALINET in cooperation with Leigh Grinstead at BCR. See Appendix E for survey proposal.

Survey One -- May-August, 2009

PALINET and BCR will work together to conduct an online Heritage Health Index-type survey to reach a greater percentage of the 1200+ cultural organizations in Colorado. ***Our intent is not to recreate what has already been done*** here in the state ***but rather to amplify that effort.*** PALINET and BCR will gather information about local trends by constructing an instrument based on HHI results. PALINET's consultant will be responsible for developing the content of the survey, while BCR will implement the survey. The announcement of the survey will be sent to all 1200+ Colorado institutions via cultural heritage listservs. Consortium members will identify institutions that may need to receive a hard copy of the survey, and contact institutions to encourage completion of the survey.

Survey Two -- July-September, 2009

PALINET/BCR will conduct twelve, two-hour onsite surveys. Visits will be conducted at representative institutions. Sites will be selected based upon identified trends and recommendations of the Consortium Committee. Site visits will be used to affirm and complete data; investigate variations from trends; and account for unique institutional types. Criteria for a site visit include: geography and type of cultural heritage institution, e.g. tribal museum, historic house museum, art museum, public library, special library, governmental archive, historical society and special collection.

Product: An assessment of the conditions of organizations and their collections and archives in Colorado.

Expected Results: These two types of surveys will allow us to identify the condition of our state's cultural heritage collections and how to focus state-wide workshops and training.

Action 4: Training Workshops and State Conference sessions: October 1, 2009 – February 1, 2010

2-3 Training workshops and conference sessions will be offered to partner organizations based on survey results -- at the CWAM, SRMA, and CAL state conferences. An RFP will be issued for a day-long workshop to address the most urgent collections needs as identified by the survey results. Topics may be emergency planning, response and/or recovery training, conservation services, or environmental control.

Product: Two-three workshops presented at professional conference in different regions of the state for the museum, archives and library community with 35-60 attendees at each. SRMA and CWAM have had joint annual meetings in the past, and organizations might join together for these workshops if practical. Potential organizations identified as having an interest in creating such workshops include Western States & Territories Preservation Assistance Service (WESTPAS) and AMIGOS, as well as other conservators from AIC. See Appendix F for sample workshop proposal.

Expected Results: At least 85 library, archives and museum staff and volunteers will attend workshops and training sessions conducted by conservators and other specialists. These workshops will equip staff and volunteers to return to their community with the knowledge to begin detailed assessments of their collections, implement preventive conservation measures, and develop emergency plans. A total of 150 library, archives and museum staff and volunteers will attend the program *sessions* held at the CWAM, SRMA and CAL annual meetings. Consortium members will present the findings of the surveys at the sessions. Additionally, at least 100 staff and volunteers will access the online streaming video presentations of the sessions and workshops, participate in the blog and/or wiki and use one of the online training modules.

Products as a Result of the Planning Process

A final report with evaluations and recommendations for the fields will be produced and published online. The report can then be used by institutions across the state to start the conversation with governing officials, like trustees and community members about the “state of the state” of collections care and crisis. That final report will also create a map for continued cross-disciplinary collaboration and implementation in Colorado.

3. Project Resources: Budget and Personnel

Leaders from Colorado’s libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies have gathered together to conduct a series of surveys and training workshops to plan for the needs of our heritage. Our grant request represents a sound, achievable plan for Colorado’s cultural heritage organizations, supported by a collaboration of partners committed to addressing the issues and needs identified in this grant.

The amount of \$40,000 is requested to fund consulting fees, travel, supplies and materials, and meeting expenses. Partners will provide an in-kind match of \$29,908 in staff salaries, travel, and per diem. The cost of combining information for a directory of cultural organizations in Colorado, and presenting sessions at annual meetings will all be provided as in-kind match.

Leigh A. Grinstead: Digital Initiatives Coordinator of BCR’s CDP – Grants Administrator will work with Tom Claeson of PALINET to conduct 6 of the site visit surveys. She has over 20 years of experience working in museums and overseeing collections. She has managed federal grants for IMLS, and NEH and is well versed in collaborative techniques, and the facilitation needed for successful project management.

Laura Douglas: Colorado State Representative for CWAM and board member to the Mountain Plains Museum Association will be acting as the Project Coordinator, Authorized Representative, for CWAM on this project. Laura has worked in the museum field in the Denver metro area since 1990 in education, collections, development and as a museum executive director. She has also overseen numerous IMLS, FEMA and other state and federal grants for 11 nonprofit organizations in Colorado.

Thomas F.R. Claeson Program Director for New Initiatives, PALINET, will be developing the online survey for the project and conducting 6 of the 2-hour site visits, and the resulting analysis. Claeson has sixteen years of experience consulting for libraries, archives, and museums. He administers PALINET’s preservation services, digital collections creation and management services. With his extensive knowledge preservation and knowledge in combination with his experience in data gathering and having worked on five of Connecting to Collections grants to date, we believe Claeson is ideally situated for this project.

Liz Bishoff, Director, Digital and Preservation services, BCR will serve as the project’s evaluator. Bishoff has served as the Project Manager on more than a dozen state and federally funded grant programs, including a half dozen IMLS funded grants. She brings extensive experience working across cultural heritage institutions both as a grant recipient and as a grant evaluator. Additionally Bishoff will serve as the meeting facilitator for the Project meetings. Bishoff has more than 35 years experience working in libraries, the most recent twelve years working in collaborative digitization with cultural heritage institutions.